



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

A CATACOMB CHURCH ON THE HILL OF EVIL COUNSEL.

BY JAMES A. MONTGOMERY.

The University of Pennsylvania.

On December 7, 1914, Prof. Kemper Fullerton and I visited the Greek convent Deir 'Abū Tōr on the summit of the Hill of Evil Counsel (Jebel 'Abū Tōr), to the south of the Valley of Hinnom. Our cicerone was the learned and agreeable Timotheos Themelis, librarian of the Greek Patriarchate. On this ground, one of the most commanding spots about Jerusalem, the Greeks were laying out new monastic buildings. It is a locality hallowed by the memory of Modestus, bishop of Jerusalem 633-634, who had distinguished himself before his episcopate by his zeal for the Church and its sanctuaries in the troublous times of the Persian invasion, 614. A large mound of débris is witness to the structure reared by him on this spot; its portal is still visible and broken pillars lie around. The new convent is to perpetuate the pious bishop's name.

The object of our visit was a catacomb church which had been discovered in the preceding year and of which up to the present writing, 1922, no description has been published in an account accessible to me. One passes through a large vaulted chamber, used as a chapel, at the side of the hill-top, and, descending by some rough, rock-hewn steps, enters into a low passage running to the south. This is cut through the rock. After three paces we turned to the right and found ourselves in another passage well arched above with white stone. It seems once to have led farther west, but suddenly stops, blocked with débris. At this point there is a masonry passage, at right angles to the first, running to the south, and five paces brought us into the lost underground chapel.

This is a vaulted chamber, 16 ft. in length, 7 ft. 6 in. in width, 9 ft. 3 in. in height. The wall of the south side is the natural rock, which about four and a half feet above the floor is cut outwards so as to form the spring of the arched roof. On that side the architect could make use of the natural rock of the hill. But the ground slopes rapidly away, and the north side of the chapel is a well constructed wall of white stone, cut square, based upon the natural rock, which at some points shows above the floor. There is an arch-spring corresponding to that on the opposite side. This spring projects about 1½ in. from the wall at its start, and this feature has evidently been imitated on the other side in the rock cutting, indicating an artistic nicety on the part of the architect. The arched roof consists of large rubble, mostly plastered over. There are traces of plaster on the

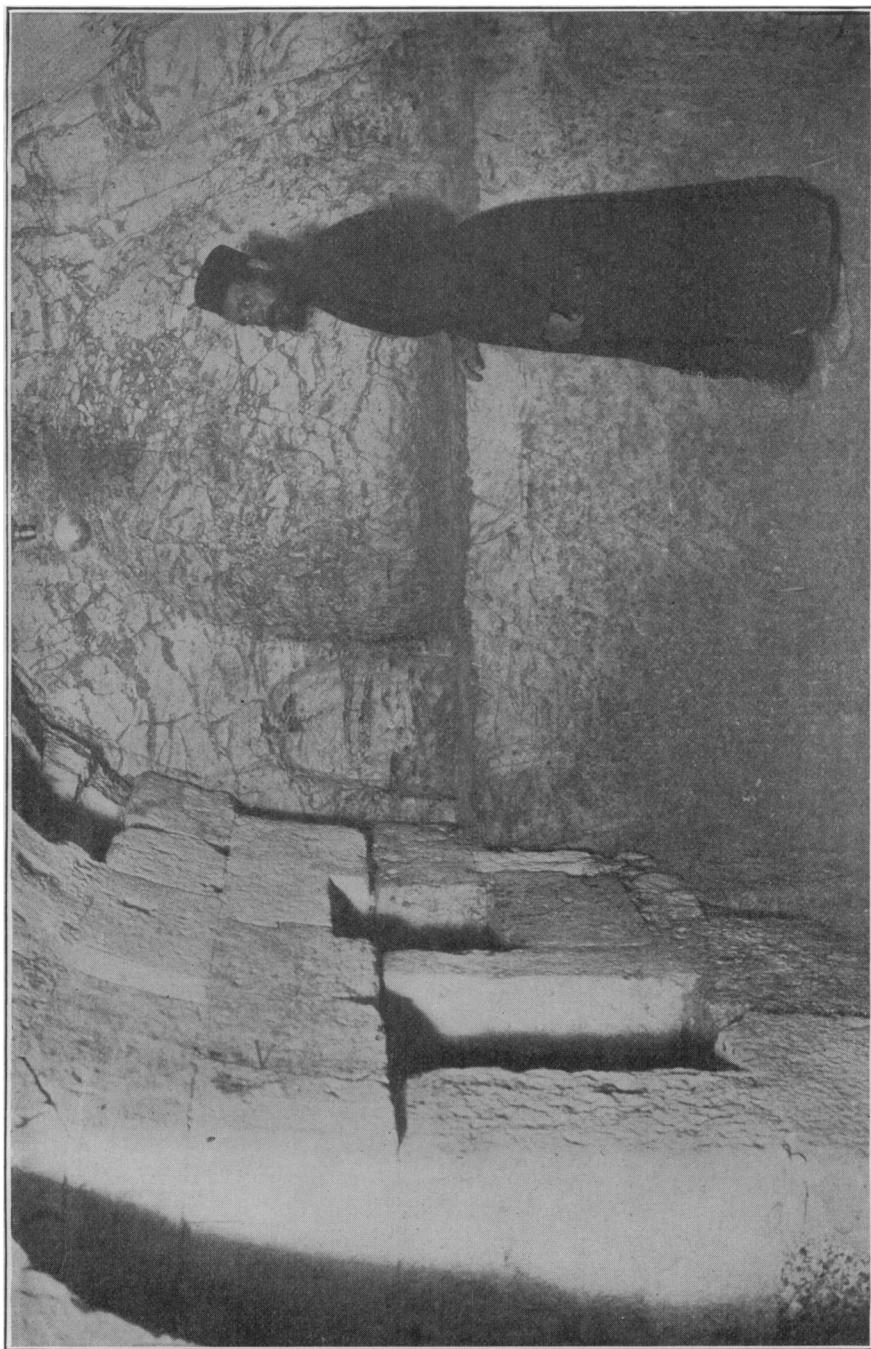


FIG. 1. Subterranean Chapel on the Hill of Evil Counsel, Jerusalem.

rock wall. The inside of the roof appears to be about three feet below the surface of the soil.

At the west end is an arched doorway, with steps hewn in the rock, ascending toward the surface. Much of this opening is blocked by débris, the top of the hole being now covered by metal sheeting. An exterior arch of large dimensions indicates a former portal. Toward the eastern end of the peak of the roof a square hole of masonry once let in air and a little light.

At the eastern end, exactly orientated, is the sanctuary. This is represented by a low rise in the floor, the width of the chamber and a little over 4 ft. in depth. At the right hand has been left a large block of the natural stone, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ by $1\frac{1}{2}$ ft. square and 2 ft. high, evidently the *throne*. In the east end an altar has been constructed by cutting a spheroidal apse in the rock, below the roof, 4 ft. wide, 2 ft. deep, 3 ft. 9 in. high. To the left of this is a similar apsidal cutting, 1 ft. 4 in. wide by 2 ft. high. This was evidently the table for the Holy Gifts, the Prothesis. Also on the north side, to the west of the Prothesis, a large open closet had been executed, 3 ft. deep by 1 ft. 4 in. wide,—doubtless the Treasury for the holy vessels. Above the arch of the altar apse are cut the lines of a linear cross with T-shaped ends. Thus we have here, partly cut in the living rock, the furnishings of a complete chapel. The accompanying photograph shows most of the details of the east end.

To what age and circumstances is this catacomb church to be assigned? As one mark of dating, Father Timotheos pointed out that the Prothesis is not known in the Greek churches before the seventh century. And, indeed, the careful construction and the elaborate ecclesiology of the building do not indicate a primitive date. It is by no means as primitive as the subterranean chapel in the convent of Mount Zion, where old cisterns have been adapted to sacred purposes. If it is to be regarded as a subterranean refuge for the rites of the Church, the chapel may be ascribed to the troublous days of Modestus, and the tortuous passage on the south side be understood as a means of flight. But I am inclined to think that it was simply a semi-subterranean oratory for the religious or for hermits, while it may have served a particular use for the faithful in the days of persecution.